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ABSTRACT

Intended as a basis for the development of cooperation between school counselors and reading personnel, this paper discusses counselor involvement in secondary school reading programs. The various sections of the paper contain the following: (1) an overview of the role of the school counselor at the secondary school level, (2) an overview of reading instruction at that level, (3) a review of literature pertaining to school counseling and reading, and (4) an analysis of selected issues, including the counselor's role in helping to implement mainstreaming, as a referral agent and as a diagnostician. (FL)

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The Counselor's Role in the Secondary Reading Program: Selected Issues and Implications

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin State Reading Association Spring Conference (Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, March 18-20, 1982)

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The Counselor's Role in the Secondary Reading Program: Selected Issues and Implications

Walter Hill, in Secondary School Reading: Process, Program, Procedure, maintains that the school counselor is perhaps "the most underused potential staff resource the secondary reading program has." (p. 338) This paper will deal with some of the issues relating to counselor involvement and interaction with reading personnel and reading programs at the secondary level. Included in this analysis will be 1) an overview of school counseling at the secondary level, 2) an overview of reading at the secondary level, 3) a review of significant literature relating to school counseling and reading, and 4) an analysis of selected issues and implications for both counselors and reading program personnel.

It is not the intent of the present discussion to present an inclusive summary of counseling programs or models for secondary school counseling. Rather, it is hoped that the foundation of this paper will provide a basis for the development of cooperation between both guidance and reading personnel.

School Counseling at the Secondary Level

[Note: The main content of this section is taken from two primary sources: 1) The Role Statement for Secondary Counseling (The March 1977 School Counselor) and 2) Guidelines for Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Services (New Jersey State Department of Education, Trenton, New Jersey - ED 193 551)]

At the secondary level, educational organization has reached a high level of bureaucracy. This division of labor--or specifically, in role assignment---can be clearly seen in the role and function of the secondary school counselor.

Guidance personnel at the secondary level have several specific roles and responsibilities:

Personal Counseling This involves consideration of developmental and situational adjustment problems that may interfere with efficient functioning, including:

a) dealing with pupil anxiety and confusion about the immediate situation;

b) providing support for the purpose of guided self-examination;

c) understanding the student's behavior and the consequences;

d) encouraging the student to use new self-understandings in future planning and decision making and

e) identifying and referring the student to other appropriate sources of assistance.

The counselor's involvement in personal counseling may also include *Crisis Counseling*, consideration of extreme emotional reactions that disrupt immediate functioning.

Consulting Services Consulting involves the professional sharing of information and knowledge with others who play an important part in the student's total education. This is a significant part of the counselor's role. And unfortunately, this aspect of the role may require the majority of the counselor's time. Examples of consulting responsibilities include, but are not limited to the following:

a) collaborating with other professionals in the school community on matters relating to human growth and development and related topics;

b) educating the school community to the purposes and functions of the guidance program;

c) helping the school district in the development and implementation of school programs;

d) cooperating with administrative and instructional staff in relation to graduation requirements as they pertain to curricular modifications and remedial programs;

e) maintaing contacts with pupil personnel from other schools and agencies;

f) participating in the identification, evaluation, I.E.P. (Individual Educational Plan) development and program implementation for handicapped students;

g) planning and supporting programs to deal with current pupil problems; e.g., absenteeism, truancy, violence and vandalism;

h) cooperating with inservice and staff development programs;

i) establishing relationships with appropriate community agencies;

j) cooperating with business and industry to facilitate students' career planning, job training, and post-secondary training; and,

k) cooperating with post secondary educational institutions to facilitate student planning and admissions.

Parental Assistance The counselor must also serve as the consultant to parents and guardians regarding the growth, educational and career planning, and the development of the student. To be effective in this role the counselor must:

a) accept parents as individuals and acknowledge their uniqueness;

b) respect the basic right and responsibility of parents to assist their children in decision making;

c) convey a sincere interest in establishing a helpful and cooperative relationship; and,

d) assure parents of the confidentiality of information received.

Appraisal of Students [Note: This subsection is taken from Shertzer and Stone, Fundamentals of Guidance: Houghton Mifflin, 1981]

The primary goal of student appraisal is to establish the uniqueness of the individual student. Appraisal can involve both formal testing as well as non-testing data. Shertzer and Stone identify the following uses of tests by counselors:

a) to help students understand their abilities, interests, and personal characteristics;

b) to help predict future student performance such as college success or work success;

c) to help students make educational and vocational decisions;

d) to help diagnose student problems; and,

e) to assess the outcomes of guidance and counseling.

The following non-test methods may be used for student appraisal:

a) observation

b) anecdotal records

c) rating scales

d) cumulative records

e) pupil data questionaires

f) interviews

g) autobiographies

h) sociometric techniques; and,

i) case studies.

Public Relations The counselor has a professional responsibility to maintain communication with public agencies and subgroups so that there is a basis for the above responsibilities.

Reading Organization at the Secondary Level

[The main content of this section is taken from French, "Organizing and Evaluating Secondary Reading Programs", paper presented at Wisconsin State Reading Association Spring Conference, March 1981]

Within the total structure of school reading program development, secondary programs in reading are relatively new. This section will describe an approach to secondary reading program organization which is based on a balance between reading for skill development, reading for recreation and application, and reading for information--the content area reading program.

As defined and used here, secondary reading implies grades seven through twelve. The goal of this organizational plan is a balance of the three strands named below:

Reading for Skill Development At the secondary level, reading for skill development can be accomplished in several ways; through:

a) continuation of the elementary basal reading program;

b) remedial and corrective reading classes;

c) developmental reading classes;

d) college bound reading/study skill classes; and/or

e) reading tutorial programs.

Reading for Recreation Reading for recreation in a secondary reading program includes three primary components: school-wide programs; e.g. Sustained Silent Reading, the availability and involvement of a library or IMC, and/or elective reading courses which highlight recreational reading.

Reading for Information - The Content Area Reading Program The de-

velopment of content reading skills is essential to a balanced reading program at the secondary level. In this regard, the commitment and involvement of all staff is necessary for program success. One process which elicits this involvement is a coordinated in-service program. The reading coommittee usually has the responsibility for this coordination. The members of the committee might include the following:

a) reading teachers and specialists
b) librarians
c) content teachers
d) counselors
e) administrators

A Review of Selected Literature Related to Guidance and Reading

In reviewing the literature, it is surprising to find (and frustrating as well) that little has been written or developed on counselor interaction with reading programs.

In 1969, the International Reading Association published Guidance and the Teaching of Reading by Ruth Strang. Although the text is somewhat dated (for example, it does not include anything on public law 94-142), it does provide a foundation for the present discussion. One primary thesis in her text is that both reading and counseling are developmental in nature. Each progress through definitive stages. For example, one aspect of school counseling at the elementary level may deal with the process of discovery. In later years, this prccess of discovery may be the foundation for a career choice.

Chapter Five of Strang presents the concept of a "team approach" between counselors and reading specialists. The duties of each are

summarized as follows:

The *counselor* can:

a) help teachers to prevent reading problems by understanding the nature and extent of developmental reading;

b) interest and assist teachers in improving students' reading;

c) conduct sessions on study skills and learning (especially when there is no reading specialist);

d) assist in the identification of students who have specific needs in reading;

e) work with individual cases in which educational, psychological, social, and vocational problems are associated with reading;

f) work with exceptional children--especially in relation to their unique needs in reading development;

g) cooperate with the school librarian in acquiring books that are useful in both guidance and reading;

h) cooperate with reading personnel when confronted with guidance problems that become reading problems;

i) in some instances modify the home environment to benefit the student; and

j) serve on administrative and policy making committees to support the development of school wide reading programs for all students.

The *reading specialist* can:

a) help forestall (or prevent) guidance problems by preventing academic problems through improved teaching of reading throughout the school;

b) teach developmental reading courses;

c) meet the needs of severely retarded readers--in special classes or in individual sessions;

d) establish a reciprocal relationship with guidance workers in the diagnosis and treatment of reading problems;

e) serve on administrative and policy making committees to support the development of school wide reading programs;

f) help to create community conditions that are favorable to reading development; and,

g) participate in a team approach to the treatment of reading guidance problems. This team to include:

1) teachers
2) counselor
3) reading specialist
4) psychologist
5) social worker
6) other specialists available to the school system.

One program that has applied these principles is Project RIPPS in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. [RIPPS stands for Reading Instruction and Pupil Personnel Services]. According to the RIPPS overview filmstrip narration[1] the project recognized that many children fail to learn, and that reading difficulty is often a reason for this failure. However, reading difficulty can be viewed as a causal problem or as a symptomatic problem. In RIPPS reading specialists are primarily responsible for reading problems that are causal in nature. And the reading specialists work with guidance personnel on problems which are symptomatic of other educational or emotional problems. Within the project the counselor has specific roles which relate to reading and educational development:

a) The counselor completes a history of the student's progress in school, including:

1) school history
2) health records
3) social and economic environment
4) academic history

b) The counselor makes positive contacts with the child--"knowing and understanding the child and his needs may be all that is necessary to effect a possible solution to a particular problem" (RIPPS tape)

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[1]For information on RIPPS, contact: RIPPS Demonstration Project, Portsmouth High School, Education Lane, Portsmouth, RI 02781

c) The counselor acts as a liason between reading teachers and specialists, parents and pupil personnel services.

The contacts between parents and counselors have been particularly beneficial to the program in that they:

a) train parents in various child rearing techniques and

b) help to foster a sound working relationship between home and school.

Roger F. Aubrey's article "The Relationship of Guidance and Counseling to the Established and Emerging School Curriculum" (1979) addresses many of the problems of counseling is secondary schools--particularly in relation to the various duties a counselor must perform. He poses five "critical" questions as follows:

a) Who is most knowledgeable in advising students on curriculum choices--counselors or teachers?

b) What rationale justifies the use of counselors as schedule makers?

c) What voice will counselors have in the development of the curriculum they schedule?

d) How can teachers and counselors work together to meet specified objectives?

e) What role should counselors play in the evaluation of curriculum?

These questions relate to the issues and implications section which follows.

Selected Issues and Implications

This section will deal with issues related to the development of the school counselor's role at the secondary level as it relates to the total school reading program.

School Counselors and PL 94-142 One primary goal of school reading programs is meeting the needs of all students--including the handicapped. In November 1975 PL 94-142 the Education for All Handicapped

Children Act was passed by Congress. The law has had specific impact on counselors primarily in 1) program planning, 2) mainstreaming efforts, 3) program monitoring, and 4) counseling of parents. Since reading programs also entail aspects of the above, the counselor and reading specialist will probably cooperate a great deal in relation to the education of special needs children. Although this cooperation will vary from district to district, these shared responsibilities may include the following:

a) participation in team meetings;

b) development of the IEP;

c) monitoring progress and record keeping;

d) parental counseling and consulting;

e) extracurricular planning;

f) classroom consulting; and,

g) in-service training. (Humes, 1979)

It should be understood that the cooperation described above may be reality in many districts. . .even prior to the passage of the bill. However, where this has not been the case, the law provides a framework for future development and cooperation.

Counselor as Referral Agent Often reading classes at the secondary level are electives to be chosen by students and/or parents. As this implies, there must be a procedure that ensures a way for students who need reading assistance to find their way into the proper classes. Since the school counselor is usually responsible for the scheduling of students it follows that the counselor can and should function as the one to refer students to these classes. For the counselor to be effective in this role the following seem to be prerequisites:

The *counselor* should:

a) have a good idea what is taught in the reading classes at the various levels. This knowledge can be gained by 1) speak- with reading teachers about their classes and their expectations for students in them, or 2) by visiting the reading classes to experience the teaching styles and atmosphere of the classes.

b) have a good idea what each students' needs are. This does not imply that counselors need be primarily concerned with diagnosis. But the counselor should have a schema for determining students' needs. This may include a review of past academic history as well as the results of interviews and observations.

The task of referral agent is particularly important in dealing with students new to the school. For here, appropriate placement is a high priority to initial success.

Counselor as Diagnostician Many times scheduling of classes is completed during the summer vacation. This is especially the case with new students. Since many reading specialists do not work during the summer, the counselor may be required to determine the general reading ability of incoming students. To fulfill this goal, the counselor may use both *formal* and *informal* assessments.

Formal Assessment in Reading

Several short-form standardized reading tests are available to counselors which can provide an indicator of reading ability. This section will briefly discuss some of these instruments.

Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) The WRAT is a paper/pencil test that assesses achievements in the areas of reading, spelling, and arithmetic. On regard to the present discussion, the reading subtest may be used as a screening device by counselors. The reading subtest includes skills in letter and word recognition. The test yields

scores as grade equivalents, percentiles within grades, and as standard scores with a mean of 100. The WRAT provides global information in regard to a student's reading ability. The reading subtest can be administered in less than 15 minutes.

Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests The Woodcock contains a series of five reading subtests appropriate for students in grades K - 12. The five subtests include 1) letter identification, 2) word identification, 3) word attack, 4) word comprehension, and 5) passage comprehension. Since raw scores for each of the subtests can be converted to grade scores, age scores, percentiles, and standard scores, it is not necessary to administer the entire battery to obtain specific reading information. At the secondary level, the word identification and two comprehension subtests are most appropriate for diagnosing student reading ability. And, unlike the WRAT, the Woodcock can provide definitive skill diagnosis which can be shared with the reading specialist. The administration time for these subtests will vary from student to student.

Another type of formal reading assessment are standardized reading tests such as the *Nelson - Denny Reading Test* and the *Gates-MacGinite Reading Tests*. These tests provide reading scores in 1) vocabulary, 2) comprehension, and 3) total reading. These tests may be more useful to the counselor since they are read by the student; that is, the counselor does not administer the test as in the WRAT or Woodcock. These are both timed tests with the adminsitration time being approximately one hour.

Informal Assessment

This section will deal with specific approaches to informal assessment and diagnosis of students' reading ability.

Oral Reading A counselor can get a fairly accurate idea of the student's reading ability by asking the student to read orally. The text books used in classes at the student's grade level would be highly appropriate for this activity.

A proficient reader will usually:

a) read with appropriate expression;

b) pronounce nearly all words correctly;

c) observe punctuation appropriately; and,

d) read at an appropriate oral rate.

A poor reader will usually:

a) lack appropriate expression;

b) mispronounce words or block at unknown words;

c) fail to observe appropriate punctuation cues; and,

d) read slowly--perhaps even word by word;

A poor reader may also

a) reverse word order in sentences read;

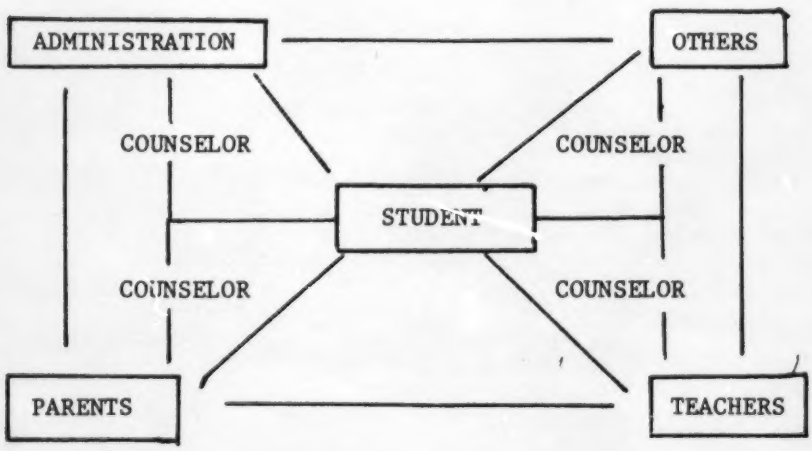
b) insert words which are not in the text; or

c) omit words which appear in the text.

Student Attitudes and Reading Habits Many times, a student will admit that he/she does not like to read or that reading is difficult for him/her. When the student does not freely admit reading difficulties, the counselor can question the student in regard to reading interests and activities. Usually, a poor reader will not have much to say about reading and may even become upset when pressed to discuss the subject.

Past Academic Record A third indicator of reading ability is the student's past performance in classes which stress reading and reading related activities. English and History are two subject areas which may stress reading ability. Low grades in these subjects may indicate reading difficulty.

Counselor as Liason In addition to the counselor's overall role, the counselor must function in an educational community, as a member of a particular faculty, and in regard to individual students, as a member of an individual team. This is illustrated below:



The counselor functions as a liason/mediator/facilitator between a given student and a variety of others. The manner in which the counselor will act or be percieved in a given role will depend on the participants in the given interaction.

The Counselor in the Testing Program In many school systems, the guidance counselor functions as the coordinator of the district testing program. This role has particular importance in regard to the overall development, implementation, and evaluation of the

school reading program. The responsibilities inherent in this role are as follows (from School Counselor Role Statement):

The *Counselor* can or must:

a) work with members of the faculty to provide appropriate information, materials, and consultant services to support teachers' efforts;

b) contribute to overall curriculum development by providing data in support of curriculum success;

c) provide meaningful information on academic progress for students, parents, and other members of the professional staff;

d) assist in research related to pupils needs by conducting studies related to the improvement of educational programs and services; and,

e) act as consultant to teachers and administration by sharing appropriate data on students, identifying students with special needs, suggesting materials, and participating in inservice training programs.

Summary

Both counselors and reading specialists function as helpers to students in school programs. In addition, both can function as appropriate members of educational teams. Both can serve as liason between parents and schools, schools and students, and at times, between parents and children.

This paper has presented various issues related to these roles and responsibilities. The emphasis on related role is based on the hope that cooperation between reading personnel and guidance personnel will continue to develop and grow in the future.

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